



Attuned

A NEWSLETTER OF AGST ALLIANCE FOR INFORMED PRAYER | NOVEMBER 2013

'... let us commit ourselves afresh to pray. Prayer is a call, a command and a gift. Prayer is the indispensable foundation and resource for all elements of our mission.' (The Capetown Commitment)

AGST Alliance is a theological training venture offering specialised post-graduate theological programs for church leaders and theological/Bible college faculty in SE Asia, to equip them for more effective Christian ministry and mission.

AGST Alliance – part of the network of Asia Graduate School of Theology consortia – comprises these colleges:

- Bangkok Bible Seminary (Thailand)
- Bible College of Malaysia
- Chiang Mai Theological Seminary (Thailand)*
- East Asia School of Theology (Singapore)
- Malaysia Baptist Theological Seminary
- Malaysia Bible Seminary
- Malaysia Evangelical College (East Malaysia)*
- Myanmar Evangelical Graduate School of Theology
- Phnom Penh Bible School (Cambodia)*
- Thailand Pentecostal Seminary

*Associate members.

The Middle East Association for Theological Education consortium (MEATE) is also an associate member of AGST Alliance.

AGST Alliance was established in 2004. Its programs are validated by the Asia Theological Association.

For a better reading experience, we suggest you view this copy in Full Screen mode. Go to View in your Adobe Reader (or other PDF reader) and select Full Screen Mode.

www.agstalliance.org

Passing of AGST Alliance founding leader

We were deeply saddened on 4 September by news of the death of a founding member of our AGST Alliance Governing Board, Rev. Dr Eddy Ho Pitt Lup. Eddy failed to come through heart surgery, for which he had been waiting for some time.

On the Governing Board, Eddy initially represented Malaysia Bible Seminary, where he was dean of the English Department. He held the position of secretary (2004–05), chair (2005–Dec. 2009), and treasurer (2011–his death). Eddy was our key liaison person in the setting up of AGST Alliance Sdn Bhd, and was an active director from the company's incorporation in 2008 until his death. When he assumed the role of Principal of Malaysia Evangelical College (Sarawak) in 2009, he was quick to seek MEC's associate membership of AGST Alliance.

Thoughtful, encouraging and irenic, Eddy was a valued contributor to the pioneering and consolidation of our AGST Alliance ministry, especially when we needed to negotiate our way through a period of corporate turbulence. His collegiality and friendship was greatly valued by those of us with whom he served. But the quality of his faith is perhaps his greatest legacy to us. This faith was epitomized in an email from him during the uncertainties of his failing health earlier this year, when he wrote:

I believe the Lord is in control of the whole situation and my life... Even if He takes my life tomorrow it will be according to His good pleasure and I have nothing to complain about... Pray for the Lord's will for me. I am seeking the Lord on my future and I pray to be used by Him for His glory. Pray that if He gives me even a day to live I will live to the glory of His name!

What a wonderful example of deep trust for us to adopt, too.

- *Thank God for Eddy's life and service in theological education, and for the legacy he has left among students, faculty and other colleagues in AGST Alliance, as well as MBS and MEC.*
- *Pray for Eddy's wife Cynthia and son Enoch (with his wife Alice and granddaughter Caitlyn) through this time.*



AROUND OUR PROGRAMS

PhD(Theol) program accredited

After Dr Paul Woods received our first PhD(Theol) award this year, we requested the Asia Theological Association to assess the program with a view to it receiving full accreditation. The visiting evaluation team has since recommended this accreditation.

This accreditation (officially 'validation', but the intent is the same) was allowed for when our other programs were accredited in early 2010, to be confirmed after we had a graduate in the program.

Our PhD(Theol) program has been especially commended for its Asian focus, offering non-residency flexibility which does not require relocation and ministry disruption, and reasonable fees.

New EdD in Child and Family Development

Our new Doctor of Education in Child and Family Development is scheduled to begin in September 2014. Applications are now invited from potential students.

This professional development program will provide a qualification for Christian leader-practitioners in organisations/NGOs (whether or not specifically Christian) which are focusing on advocacy, development and/or social welfare with children and families. The program will integrate Christian theology with practice, to sustain and motivate the leaders in these demanding arenas.

Director of the EdD(C&FD) program is Dr Rosalind Tan, who is Director of the Holistic Child Development Institute (based at MBTS, Penang) – and AGST Alliance's first PhD(Ed) graduate.

Pastoral and academic emphases for MTh(Bib. Studies)

Students in the MTh(Bib. Studies) program – commencing in May 2014 – will be able to opt for one of two emphases: pastoral or academic.

Leaders in church-based or Christian organisation settings looking to enhance their competence and confidence in using the Bible in their pastoral and leadership ministry are likely to find the **pastoral** emphasis suitable. Those undertaking the program to teach with confidence biblical courses in a Bible college/seminary, will likely prefer the **academic** emphasis.

Required competency in the biblical languages will differ for the two emphases, and the pastoral emphasis will allow for a higher proportion of coursework that has a more directly applied focus.

- *Thank God for the encouragement of the accreditation of our PhD(Theol) program.*
- *Pray for potential students to become aware of our programs – the EdD(C&FD) and MTh(Bib. Studies) especially – and to apply in good time.*
- *Pray for the EdD(C&FD) program committee, under Rosalind's leadership, as they shape up the finer details of the program structure.*
- *The Education Programs Committee is reviewing the content and shape of the MTh(Ed)/EdD programs' coursework, in preparation for a new cycle to begin around 2015. Pray for creative alertness to the needs of church and society that will impact on the decisions to be made.*

Collaboration enhanced

We have recently noted two informal avenues for collaboration among our students, to encourage each other to persevere in their studies in what is often a rather alone experience, especially at the time of thesis/ dissertation research and writing. It's pleasing to see this collaboration – a significant Christian ministry value being expressed and reinforced.

Writing accountability group

A group of our Singapore-based MTh(Ed)/EdD students have formed an accountability group to encourage one another in their thesis/dissertation process. They meet together every 6-8 weeks. No prizes for exeging the smiles of Chris, Eng Hwa, Carlos and Kenny!



Facebook group

A number of our students also interact – albeit spasmodically – in an AGST Alliance Community Facebook group. It's proving a good avenue for highlighting resources, requesting insights and sharing encouragements, along with some good-natured banter.

- 'ABD' ('all but dissertation') is a regrettable but common description of students who have completed all the coursework and other requirements for a degree, with the exception of the dissertation/thesis. Pray for AGST Alliance students at the thesis/dissertation stage of their programs, that they will be motivated and practice good time management in order to finish well.
- Thank God for the peer collegiality such as those in the writing accountability and Facebook groups are experiencing, for the support this provides them with to persevere.

Apply for AGST Alliance programs

■ MTh(Bib. Studies) & PhD(Bib. Studies)

MTh(Bib. Studies) – commencing mid-2014
PhD(Bib. Studies) – candidates may commence as soon as they are accepted

■ MTh(Theol) & PhD(Theol) PhD(Ed)

Accepted applicants for these on-going programs may commence as soon as they are accepted.

■ Masters in Transformational Development

A new intake of students will commence in early 2014. Applications close 10 January.

■ EdD in Child & Family Development

Commencing in September 2014. Applications are now being received.

Visit www.agstalliance.org for program and application details

AGST ALLIANCE DEVELOPMENTS

Governing board encouragements and challenges

Encouragements and challenges were highlighted at the AGST Alliance Governing Board annual meeting, held on the campus of Bangkok Bible Seminary on 25 September.

Encouragements centred around the reasonable student numbers, graduations and interest in our ongoing programs. Challenges were noted in several areas:

- It seems ironic that there has been only low interest expressed to date for our MTh(Bib. Studies) program, when the need in our region is great for better equipped people to teach biblical studies in seminaries and churches. We are hoping that the introduction of the pastoral and academic emphases may attract further interest.
- We discussed ways in which AGST Alliance's and member seminaries' strengths might be better harnessed for mutual enrichment and effectiveness.
- We are continuing to prepare for a leadership transition by the end of 2015, when Dr Allan Harkness plans to step down. Priority will be given now to appointing an executive administrator for AGST Alliance .



The Governing Board meeting, chaired by Dr Sunny Tan (far left); We celebrated with Rev. Wendy Ching the 21st anniversary of her joining the faculty of BCM.

New director appointed

Following the death of Dr Eddy Ho, the Governing Board has invited Dr Steve Taylor to become a director of our Malaysian registered company AGST Alliance Sdn Bhd.

We are delighted that Steve has accepted the invitation, and joins the current directors Rev. Wendy Ching and Drs Sunny Tan and Allan Harkness to take responsibility for the company.

Steve is a member our Theology Programs Committee and facilitates our MTh(Theol) modules. An independent British missionary in Thailand, he has been working with indigenous churches under the Evangelical Fellowship of Thailand for more than 30 years. He is currently Director of Research and Development at Bangkok Bible Seminary (where he served as Academic Dean for 4 years). He is married to Filipina Flor Ulan-Taylor .



- *Thank God for the fine group of leaders who comprise the AGST Alliance Governing Board, especially office-holders Sunny Tan (chair), Wendy Ching (secretary) and Keith Shubert (treasurer).*
- *Thank God, too, for Steve Taylor's willingness to become a director of AGST Alliance Sdn Bhd; and for the skills and perspectives he brings to that role.*
- *Pray for special wisdom for the Governing Board as AGST Alliance moves into the transitions in its leadership structures over the next two years.*
- *Pray that God will provide the right person with the right gifts and skills at the right time for the executive administrator position – and for the financial resources to fund the person.*

Executive administrator required

Do you know of someone with experience in educational administration, preferably in theological education, who may be open to using their gifting and skills to serve God in AGST Alliance?

We'd like to make contact with that person!

Please contact Dr Allan Harkness, dean@agstalliance.org.

Sunday 10 August 2014 AGST Alliance 10th anniversary dinner

In 2014 we will be celebrating our 10th anniversary. We are amazed at how we have developed as a credible regional post-graduate theological education venture over this decade.

The main celebration event will be an anniversary dinner on Sunday evening, 10 August, in Kuala Lumpur – to coincide with our annual Governing Board and programs committees' meetings.

Mark this date in your diary, and plan to join us!

AROUND OUR MEMBER SEMINARIES

Notable events and milestones – recently and ahead – from our AGST Alliance member seminaries include:

- **BBS (Thailand)** is awaiting building permission for a new library and resource centre project. Please pray for the contractor and the government official(s).
- **EAST (Singapore)** has successfully made the switch from a quarter to semester system; and anticipates beginning a new extension centre in East Asia at the end of this year.
- 51 students recently graduated from **MBS (Malaysia)**. Pray for MBS' second phase new building project, and the funds to cover the costs.
- Join **MBTS (Malaysia)** in praising the Lord for the many opportunities to partner with the Church in equipping God-called men and women for ministries – 159 graduates recently graduated.
- Some **MEATE seminaries (Middle East)** are preparing to incorporate online learning into their programs. Pray for smooth launching of these initiatives.
- **MEC (E. Malaysia)** rejoices in its recent successful first ATA program accreditation exercise. Pray for the current process to appoint a new principal.
- Pray that God will give wisdom to the new generation of leadership at **PPBS (Cambodia)** – principal Samnang Tep and academic dean Vuthy Son – in their still-new, challenging roles.

▪ *Different countries and cultures, different opportunities and challenges among the students and stakeholders – but all our member seminaries have access to the presence and resources of the same God. Pray for continuing alignment to God's purposes for each seminary.*

Coming MTh/EdD modules

MTh(Theology)

- **THEOLOGY & CHURCH**
Feb-May 2014;
on-campus 24-28 March
MBTS campus, Penang, Malaysia
Dr Sunny Tan (MBTS, Malaysia)

- **THEOLOGY & CONTEXTUALISATION**
June-Sept 2014;
on-campus 11-15 Aug
BCM campus, KL, Malaysia
Dr David Harley (UK)

MTh(Education)/EdD

- **SPACE, RELATIONSHIPS & LEARNING**
Feb-May 2014;
on-campus: 10-14 March
Johor Bahru, Malaysia
Dr Allan Harkness (AGST Alliance, Singapore)

MTh(Bib.Studies)

- **CONTEXTUALISATION & HERMENEUTICS**
May-Aug. 2014;
on-campus 23-28 June
STM campus, Seremban, Malaysia
Dr Augustin Pagolu (India/Indonesia)
- **THE PENTATEUCH**
May-Aug 2014;
on-campus 2-8 July
STM campus, Seremban, Malaysia
Dr Steven Guest (USA/India)

These modules are open to both credit and audit students – suitable as refresher options for Christian leaders and seminary faculty.

GRANT FOR RESOURCES

We are delighted recipients of a grant from Overseas Council Australia to provide specialised resources for our Masters for Transformational Development program. The books purchased will be under the guardianship of Malaysian Care, to add to their existing library, and so will be an asset for not just our students, but for other Christian aid and development, welfare and advocacy practitioners too.

OC Australia's grant complements another substantial grant they have given for student scholarships/subsidy for the program.

OC Australia's grant provides for the purchase of resources specifically for each coursework unit as it is offered.

Individuals, churches and trusts may like to emulate OC Australia, by granting an amount to AGST Alliance for coursework modules in our other AGST Alliance programs, e.g. our MTh(Theol) and MTh(Bib. Studies). Up to MYR1000 (~SGD400, ~USD300) per module will provide for copies of key texts to complement the set texts for each module (which the students themselves purchase).

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

Three key projects continue to be in our sights to enhance our effectiveness.

1. **Theological resources:** Our quest for an affordable means to get ready access for our students to key specialised theological electronic databases which require subscriptions. We are awaiting the outcome of an application to a UK trust to fund an initial subscription.
2. **Student management system:** Sourcing an internet-based student management system (for our student database) which is both suitable and affordable.
3. **On-line learning possibilities:** We are in the process of evaluating a specific 'virtual learning environment' (VLE) possibility to enhance our on-line learning capability.

- *Thank God for the generosity of organisations like OC Australia. Pray that we will be pointed to other willing sources of finance too.*
- *Please keep praying for discernment and clear direction for those exploring the options for our projects in process. Too often 'the tyranny of the urgent' means we are not giving adequate attention to these developments.*

For further details about our various projects, contact AGST Alliance Dean, Dr Allan Harkness <dean@agstalliance.org>.

These projects and our personnel needs have financial implications. Ear-marked finance would encourage us greatly.

FOR DONORS

Financial matters

Typical of Asian theological institutions, student fees contribute only a proportion of the total operating cost of AGST Alliance. Further finance is needed for administrative and staff support, program development and to build up our research resource capacity. Financial support is welcome, whether as occasional or regular gifts.

- *Thank God for his gracious provision for our financial needs to date – mainly through student fees and several regular support partners' gifts.*
- *Pray with us to continue to trust that 'God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply' (Hudson Taylor) – and for people who will respond to God's nudging to mediate his supply.*

- AGST Alliance bank account details for direct credit and telegraphic transfers are available from admin@agstalliance.org, or on our website (click [Support us – Financial Support – How to give financial support](#)).
- Please make RM/SG\$/US\$ cheques payable to 'AGST Alliance Sdn Bhd'; and Thai Baht cheques payable to 'Bangkok Bible Seminary'.
- USA donors may send tax-deductible financial gifts for AGST Alliance to MEANS USA (www.meansusa.org).

Attuned is published three times per year in English. Please email admin@agstalliance.org to request to receive this update regularly. We appreciate your partnership.

AGST Alliance

My Mail Box 886642, Singapore, 919191 | Tel/Fax: +65-6219-7855 | Email: info@agstalliance.org

Visit our website

www.agstalliance.org